

Lesson 32

Words To Learn This Week

refer
distress
diminish
maximum
flee
vulnerable
signify
mythology
provide
colleague
torment
loyalty

"Out, idle words, servants to shallow fools!
Unprofitable sounds, weak arbitrators!"

—Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*

1. **refer** (ri fir') hand over; send, direct, or turn for information, help, or action; (refer to) direct attention to or speak about; assign to or think of as caused by
 - a. Let us **refer** the dispute* to the dean.
 - b. Our teacher **referred** us to the dictionary for the meanings of the difficult words in the novel.*
 - c. The speaker **referred** to a verse in the Bible to support his theory.*
2. **distress** (dis tres') great pain or sorrow; misfortune; dangerous or difficult situation; to cause pain or make unhappy
 - a. The family was in great **distress** over the accident that maimed* Kenny.
 - b. My teacher was **distressed** by the dismal performance of our class on the final* examination.
 - c. Long, unscheduled delays at the station cause **distress** to commuters.*
3. **diminish** (də min' ish) make or become smaller in size, amount or importance
 - a. The excessive* heat **diminished** as the sun went down.
 - b. Our **diminishing** supply of food was carefully wrapped and placed with the baggage.*
 - c. The latest news from the battlefield confirms* the report of **diminishing** military activity.
4. **maximum** (mak' sə məm) greatest amount; greatest possible
 - a. Chris acknowledged* that the **maximum** he had ever walked in one day was fifteen miles.
 - b. We would like to exhibit* this rare* collection to the **maximum** number of visitors.
 - c. The committee anticipated* the **maximum** attendance of the first day of the performance.
5. **flee** (flē) run away; go quickly
 - a. The **fleeing** outlaws* were pursued* by the police.
 - b. One could clearly see the clouds **fleeing** before the wind.
 - c. The majority* of students understand that they cannot **flee** from their responsibilities.
6. **vulnerable** (vul' ner ə bl) capable of being injured; open to attack, sensitive to criticism, influences, etc.
 - a. Achilles was **vulnerable** only in his heel.
 - b. The investigator's nimble* mind quickly located the **vulnerable** spot in the defendant's alibi.
 - c. A **vulnerable** target for thieves is a solitary* traveler.
7. **signify** (sig' nə fī) mean; be a sign of; make known by signs, words, or actions; have importance
 - a. "Oh!" **signifies** surprise.
 - b. A gift of such value **signifies** more than a casual* relationship.
 - c. The word "fragile"* stamped on a carton **signifies** that it must be handled with caution.*
8. **mythology** (mi thäl' e jē) legends or stories that usually attempt to explain something in nature
 - a. The story of Proserpina and Ceres explaining the seasons is typical* of Greek **mythology**.
 - b. From a study of **mythology** we can conclude* that the ancients were concerned with the wonders of nature.

- c. Ancient **mythology** survives* to this day in popular* expressions such as "Herculean task" or "Apollo Project."
9. **colleague** (käl' ēg) associate; fellow worker
- The captain gave credit for the victory to his valiant* **colleagues**.
 - Who would have predicted* that our pedestrian* **colleague** would one day win the Nobel Prize for medicine?
 - We must rescue our **colleagues** from their wretched* condition.
10. **torment** (tôr ment' or tôr' ment) cause very great pain to; worry or annoy very much; cause of very great pain; very great pain
- Persistent* headaches **tormented** him.
 - The illustrations* in our history text show the **torments** suffered by the victims of the French Revolution.
 - The logical* way to end the **torment** of doubt over the examination is to spend adequate* time in study.
11. **provide** (pro vīd) to supply; to state as a condition; to prepare for or against some situation
- How can we **provide** job opportunities for all our graduates?
 - Hal said he would bring the ball **provided** he would be allowed to pitch.
 - The government is obligated, among other things, to **provide** for the common welfare and secure the blessings of peace for all citizens.
12. **loyalty** (loi' əl tē) faithfulness to a person, government, idea, custom, or the like
- The monarch* referred* to his knights' **loyalty** with pride.
 - Nothing is so important to transmit* to the youth as the sacredness* of **loyalty** to one's country.
 - Out of a sense of **loyalty** to his friends, Michael was willing to suffer torments,* and he therefore refused to identify* his colleagues* in the plot.

Read the following passage to see how the new words are used in it.

How Our Language Grows

Many popular* expressions in our language have interesting backgrounds. When we **refer** to a person's weak spot as his *Achilles heel*, we are recalling the story of the mighty Greek hero of the Trojan War, Achilles, a warrior of unusual strength and valor.* The mother of Achilles, in whose veins* flowed the blood of the gods, was warned at his birth that her son would die in battle. In great **distress**, she sought to save her son. In order to **diminish** his chances of being hurt and to give him **maximum** protection* in combat, she dipped the infant in the river Styx. The magic waters touched every part of the child's body except the heel that she held in her hand. Thus it happened many years later that as Achilles started to **flee** from an attack, a poisoned arrow struck him in the heel, the only spot where he was **vulnerable**.

Today, the meaning of *Achilles heel* is not confined* to a weak spot in the body but it also **signifies** a weakness in the character of an individual, or in the defenses of a nation, or in the structure of a system.

American politics, rather than **mythology**, provides the explanation for the word *bunk*. This word came into the language in 1820 when Felix Walker, the representative from Buncombe County, North Carolina, formed the habit of making long, unnecessary speeches in Congress. When his **colleagues** asked him why he was **tormenting** them so, he **apologized** by saying it was his patriotic* duty to put those speeches in the record out of **loyalty** to his supporters at home. The word "Buncombe" was shortened to "bunk" and came to mean any thought that has little or no worth.

Place one of the new words in each of the blanks below.

- The uneventful* flow of news was interrupted by a report of a ship in _____.
- Our temperature for the day dropped from a _____ of 85 degrees to a minimum* of 70 degrees.
- The dishonest employee* planned to _____ with several thousand dollars of the company's money.
- It was easy to see that the club members resented* Phil's _____ them with silly questions.
- Colonel Bishop's deep sense of _____ to his men signifies* an honest and honorable nature.
- Elizabeth was finally* persuaded* to _____ for her remark and to pledge* to be more careful in the future.
- What I admire in Marty is that he never abandoned* his _____ in their time of need.